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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [KMPI](#) [XF](#)
SUBJECT: GOALS FOR THE BROADER MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH
AFRICA (BMENA) INITIATIVE IN 2008

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Summary

1. Summary. The Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) initiative faces important challenges this year. We must ensure that BMENA is seen as a functioning, useful vehicle for the region's governments and reformers. The Forum for the Future must remain relevant to the needs of civil society, while offering BMENA governments a venue for discussions with the G8. The June 10 Forum subministerial will be an opportunity for civil society groups to present their 2007 recommendations. We will support the implementation of civil society action plans and the now-regular Parallel Civil Society Forum held just before the Forum for the Future. We plan to work with the Democracy Assistance Dialogue (DAD) partners to revive the draft BMENA NGO principles and to assist in creating NGO chapters/networks throughout the region. A successful November Education Ministerial is imperative if this track of the initiative is to last beyond this year. End summary.

2. The BMENA Initiative faces important challenges this year. After the cancellation of the 2007 Forum for the Future in Yemen, civil society groups question U.S. and G8 support. Some activists doubt the Administration's commitment to advancing democratic reform, and the upcoming U.S. presidential election adds to the uncertainty. We must ensure that BMENA is seen as a functioning, useful vehicle for the region's governments and reformers by achieving the following objectives.

Forum for the Future

3. Forum for the Future: The Forum must remain relevant to the needs of civil society, while offering BMENA governments a forum for discussions with the G8. It should be a permanent platform for these groups to evaluate reform progress and for civil society and governments to specify priorities for the upcoming year. We will press for more substantive, interactive discussions, despite resistance from BMENA and G8 governments. A set of principles for NGOs will be the main deliverable for 2008, laying the foundational principles for greater freedom of association in the region.

Key dates:

April 24-25: Planning meeting, Tokyo
June 9: Planning meeting, Dubai
October 18-19: Forum for the Future, Abu Dhabi

Subministerial

¶4. The second Forum subministerial will provide a transition between the 2007 events and the 2008 Forum. This subministerial will be especially important; civil society groups are still waiting to present their 2007 recommendations to governments. Holding the event earlier in the year will help maintain momentum.

Key date:

June 10: Subministerial, Dubai

Civil Society Activities

¶5. Our support is critical to the implementation of the civil society action plans. We will provide \$300,000 to the Democracy Assistance Dialogue (DAD) NGO partners to continue their activities in 2008 in the areas of women's empowerment

STATE 00038202 002 OF 002

and political pluralism; and \$1.6 million to civil society organizations region-wide to implement in-country activities that advance recommendations raised at previous Forums and parallel meetings. We will support a strategy meeting in May for civil society to coordinate proposals in preparation for the 2008 Forum meetings. We also will support a Civil Society Parallel Forum in October just before the Forum ministerial, and groups will organize their own regional meetings. We will provide logistical support to allow for the participation of civil society leaders in the Subministerial, Parallel Forum, and Forum for the Future.

Key dates:

May 10: Civil society strategy meeting, Istanbul
October TBD: Parallel Forum, Abu Dhabi

NGO Principles/Chapters

¶6. We will work with the DAD partners and BMENA governments to revive the NGO principles at the subministerial, with the goal of adoption by ministers at the Forum. The subministerial and Forum also will be opportunities for civil society partners to announce plans to establish formal civil society networks or chapters based on the principles.

Education

¶7. A successful Education Ministerial, with action plans for each of the four working groups, is imperative if the education track is to last beyond 2009.

Key dates:

March 30-31: Education Task Force, Muscat
June 17-19: Community Colleges Event, Washington
October TBD: Community Colleges Event, Morocco
November 9-10: Education Ministerial, Muscat

Coordination

18. BMENA events in 2008 are compressed into less than 8 months, requiring regular, close coordination with our government and civil society partners. By the Forum in October, we should ensure that the next BMENA chair is selected and that 2009 G8 presidency Italy is prepared to organize a Forum in 2009.

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